



April 18, 2014

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Tug Hill Times

Tug Hill Times is published semimonthly by the Tug Hill Commission for its board members, staff and associates, and the local representatives of the region's communities.

Regional Councils and CFAs

All three Regional Economic Development Councils (Central New York, Mohawk Valley and North Country) that cover parts of the Tug Hill Region are getting active on the 2014 Council Priorities and upcoming Consolidated Funding Applications (CFAs). The Budget passed by the Legislature in late March includes – \$150 million in new capital funding and \$70 million in tax credits from the Excelsior Jobs. In addition, the Environmental Protection Fund includes an additional \$9 million in funding. These and many other funding programs will be included in the 2014 CFA round. By all accounts the CFAs will likely be out soon and have tight time frames for announcements this fall. If you have ideas for new projects or projects that need to be resubmitted for funding in the CFA process, please contact the Commission offices ASAP so that we can start to work with you on submissions. There will be a lot of competition in this round and getting started early will help. Please call us @ 888-785-2380.

East Branch Fish Creek Working Group Meeting May 15

The East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group met regularly in the late 1990's and 2000's to discuss the future of the former 45,000 acres of Lyons Falls Pulp & Paper Mill lands on Tug Hill in Lewis County. The project ultimately led to the acquisition of the new East Branch of Fish Creek State Forest by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), purchase of approximately 13,000 acres by The Nature Conservancy (TNC) north of G&W Road, purchase of the remainder by a private forestry company, and a DEC working forest conservation easement put in place on the two private ownerships. The Working Group has not met since 2009, and there have been many activities and changes during the intervening five years. An invitation has been sent to a variety of stakeholders to join in a meeting on Thursday, May 15, 2014 from 5:00 -7:00 p.m. at The Alpine restaurant in Constableville. There will updates from NYSDEC, TNC, and Molpus, as well as discussion about future projects and opportunities.

Please contact Katie Malinowski at the Commission if you have any questions.

Tug Hill Commission to Meet

RACOG is hosting the Tug Hill Commissioners meeting on April 28th from 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. at the Village of Carthage Municipal Building, 120 South Mechanic Street. Highlights of the meeting include routine business of the Commission, latest updates of the Regional Economic Development Councils, discussion with the River Area Council of Governments (including the redevelopment of the former Braman Manufacturing site) and discussion and review of major projects and activities in the region.

Happy
Easter





Recently, Pat Mahar the Town of Denmark Highway Superintendent and volunteer firefighter for Copenhagen discussed how their fire department will implement a new application called “iamresponding.com”. According to Mr. Mahar, the application will allow volunteer firefighters to know who is responding to a call, including who is headed directly to the scene and who is coming to the fire station. This will help them decide if they need more responders and save critical response time.

How does it work? When their pager goes off, they can pull up the application on their smartphone, tablet, or computer. With one click of the button, others will know if they are responding to the call and if they are headed to the scene or to the station. This application can do other things, like allowing for mass messaging of responders for communication, reporting, showing hydrants, and much more.

Mr. Mahar is going to be using the hydrant data collected through the JIMI project to show locations of their hydrants in the application. He also stated that the Lowville Fire Department is already using the application successfully.

More information is available at www.iamresponding.com or by contacting Pat Mahar at denmarkhighsu-per@yahoo.com.

Tug Hill Aquifer Meeting Held; Presentation Available

Approximately 25 people met at the Adams Municipal Building April 7th to hear a progress report from the US Geological Survey (USGS) on the Tug Hill Aquifer project. Work began in 2008 and has been funded by a variety of sources, including the Tug Hill Commission, Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust, Oswego and Jefferson County Soil & Water Conservation Districts, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and USGS. The data collection phase for the northern and central aquifer is almost complete, and has included:

- GIS basemaps compilation
- Inventory of post-2000 wells (field verify locations) and wells from published reports
- Installed real-time stream gage on Trout Brook (operated for 3 years)
- Deployed 4 stream temperature loggers
- Collected WQ samples in streams (north & central)
- Seepage measurements in streams (north & central)
- Deployed four WL data loggers (Richland well field and north of Adams)
- Collected over 20 groundwater samples / over 18 surface water samples for water quality
- Revisions to Aquifer Boundary and Geology maps based on new information: especially near Adams (extends sole source aquifer)
- Passive seismic testing (north and central) for aquifer thickness
- Drilling north of Adams

The next phase of work for the northern and central portions of the aquifer will be developing a predictive groundwater model for that area, if necessary funding can be secured. An interactive computer model will allow resource managers, elected officials, and others to determine the effects of proposals or projects on the aquifer system, and make informed decisions based on the results.

To view the powerpoint, please see the Commission's website: <http://www.tughill.org/services/natural-resource-management/>

2014-15 State Budget Includes Winter Storm Impact Aid

The recently adopted 2014-15 New York State Budget includes \$40 million dollars to assist municipalities with the impacts of the exceptionally harsh winter of 2013-14. This funding is a one-time allocation intended for repairs and infrastructure improvements, to complement core construction programs, and for longer lasting roadway surfacing and overlay projects. The list of municipalities and grant award amounts may be found at:

www.nycom.org/images/documents/LAC/Extreme_Winter_Recovery_Capital_Grants.pdf

Property Tax “Freeze”

Effective for local government fiscal years beginning in 2015, the 2014 State Budget includes a program to effectively “freeze” property taxes for two years on the primary residences of homeowners with annual incomes at or below \$500,000 in local governments and school districts that stay within the tax cap. The credit, which will be distributed to each eligible homeowner in the form of a check, will be equal to the greater of: a) the amount by which the individual’s property tax bill increased from year to year or b) the amount of the individual’s prior year tax bill multiplied by the allowable levy growth factor (the cap amount) for the subsequent year. This eliminates the incentive for a municipality to automatically increase its levy to the capped amount if they don’t need to, since their residents will be eligible to receive a check as if they did levy the full amount regardless.

For the first year, no homeowner would be eligible to receive the income tax credit until the CEO or budget officer of the local government certifies to the State Comptroller and the Commissioner of Taxation and Finance that they have stayed within the cap and that they did not enact a local law to override the cap. (If a local law was enacted and the cap was not exceeded, the law would have to be repealed.) This certification must be completed no later than 21 days into the fiscal year to which it applies.

In order for homeowners in their jurisdictions to receive the property tax credit in the second year, the local government must certify that it has stayed within the tax cap (and there is no local override law in place), as well as develop (or participate in the development of) a state-approved “Government Efficiency Plan” that features shared services, cooperation agreements, mergers and/or efficiencies that, when implemented, will achieve savings for taxpayers.

Unlike the original tax freeze proposal, there is no requirement that the Government Efficiency Plans be developed on a countywide basis, although they can be. The Plans must include initiatives that will generate savings for three consecutive years equal to 1% of the combined tax levy of all of the local governments participating in the plan. The Plans must also be submitted to the Division of the Budget by June 1, 2015 and will apply to fiscal years beginning in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

For a local government that develops its own Government Efficiency Plan, the CEO has to certify, by June 1, 2015, that the local government agrees to “undertake its best efforts to fully implement the plan by the end of the local fiscal year beginning in 2017.” In addition, the CFO of such local government will need to submit to the Director of the Budget an analysis of the savings, as well as a written certification that the actions outlined in the Plan, in his/her professional opinion, would result in the projected savings equal to 1% of its 2014 tax levy for each of the three years beginning in the fiscal year that commences in 2017.

If a local government develops a Government Efficiency Plan with other municipalities, essentially the same plan-related certifications are required, but they must be submitted to the lead local government by May 15, 2015. It is then up to the lead local government to submit the Plan and all of the relevant certifications to the Director of the Budget by June 1, 2015. Both in the case of Government Efficiency Plans developed by a single local government or by more than one local government, the Director of the Budget must determine whether the requirements have been met and notify the Commissioner of Taxation and Finance no later than July 31, 2015 of his determination.

It should be noted that while the Governor’s original tax freeze proposal would have allowed the State to withhold aid from a local government that failed to implement the actions included in the Government Efficiency Plan, this provision is NOT part of the final tax freeze proposal. Finally, the law states that the Director of the Budget “shall consider past efficiencies, shared services and reforms, in their approval process to determine whether the requirements have been met.” The law does not specify an absolute date/year to which this “look back” would apply or what types of initiatives may be acceptable. It is our understanding that there will be guidance documents on the tax freeze proposal that will hopefully address this and many of the other questions that are likely to arise. (This summary of the Property Tax Freeze is reprinted from the NY Conference of Mayors).

New Housing Planned at Former Braman Manufacturing Site

The Village of Carthage is working with Habitat for Humanity and the Carthage Industrial Development Corporation to construct 5-6 affordable housing units on 3.75 acres at the former Braman Manufacturing property. With fundraising efforts underway, the Carthage Savings and Loan Bank donated \$50,000 to the Thousand Islands Area branch of Habitat to Humanity and will match another \$25,000 raised by the organization. Likewise, the Carthage Savings and Loan Association committed to donating funds to the project and 12 Honors students from the Carthage Central High School are spearheading a community awareness campaign of the organizations efforts while raising funds to advance the local housing project.

To facilitate development of the site, the Village of Carthage is constructing an access road and will install water/sewer hookups, light poles, gas & electric lines for each parcel. While a "ground breaking" is scheduled for May 8th at 3:00 p.m., construction of the foundation is scheduled for fall with a major construction effort being advanced in the spring of 2015.

Municipal Innovation Exchange Summit

FREE TRAINING EVENT

Date: April 25, 2014 **Time:** 9:00 am - 4:15 pm

Location: Holiday Inn Liverpool, 441 Electronics Parkway, Syracuse, NY 13088

This collaboration between and among school districts and local governments is key in finding new, expanded and improved ways to efficiently share services. This summit is an opportunity for you to engage with school district, county, city, village and town leaders from across the state to explore shared services, share success stories, and learn how to create more efficiencies for our taxpaying communities.

Participating organizations include the New York State School Boards Association, New York Conference of Mayors, New York State Association of Counties and Association of Towns.

Registration Deadline: **April 18, 2014**. This event is **FREE** for all participating organization members.

AGENDA

- 9:00—10:00 a.m. Registration
- 10:00 - 11:00 a.m. Shared Services in New York State: A Reform that Works
- 11:00 - Noon Economic Landscape
- 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. Lunch and Officer and CEO Roundtable
- 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. Cooperative Purchasing
- 3:00 - 4:00 p.m. Nuts and Bolts of Planning Your Project

For full details and to register visit:

<http://www.nyssba.org/events/2014/04/25/summit/municipal-innovation-exchange-summit-syracuse/>

For more information, contact the New York State School Boards Association at 518-783-0200 or 800-342-3360 or via email at info@nyssba.org.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE TODAY

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